

Commemorating the Militia's First Muster and Origin of the National Guard

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MILFORD, Mass., — The Massachusetts National Guard and the City of Salem celebrated the 371st Anniversary of the First Muster on Salem Common, Saturday, April 17.

The celebration consisted of a three-part event commemorating five significant events in the history of the Massachusetts National Guard to include the origin of the Army National Guard.

On December 13, 1636, the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony ordered the organization of the Colony's militia companies into three regiments, specifically the North, South and East Regiments. The Colonists had adopted the English militia system, which obligated males between the ages of 16 and 60, to possess arms and participate in the defense of the community. The early Colonial militia drilled weekly and provided guard details each evening to sound an alarm in case of attack. Strained relations between the Pequot Tribal Nation and the people of the Massachusetts Bay Colony required the militia to maintain a state of readiness. Although the exact date is not known, the very first muster of the East Regiment took place in Salem, Massachusetts in the spring of 1637.

America's National Guard heritage can be traced back to the First Muster in Salem more than 371 years ago. Currently, Guardsmen from Massachusetts continue a tradition of service in Afghanistan and Iraq. The North, South, and East Regiments continue to serve the Massachusetts Army National Guard as the 101st Field Artillery Regiment, the 101st Engineer Battalion, the 181st Infantry Regiment, and the 182nd Cavalry Regiment.

The first part of the celebration took place at St. Peter's Church in Salem. Soldiers from the 101st Field Artillery Regiment and military re-enactors from Glover's Regiment laid a wreath and fired a rifle-salute at the gravesite of Capt. Stephen Abbott, founder and first commander of the 2nd Corps of Cadets.

Later, Soldiers from the 101st Field Artillery Regiment, the 101st Engineer Battalion, the 181st Infantry Regiment, and the 182nd Cavalry Regiment, along with period military re-enactors, assembled at Armory Park to commemorate the American Revolution, and fired a rifle-salute and played “Taps” in remembrance of those Soldiers from the Essex Regiment who were killed and injured during the battle at Lexington and Concord.

Finally, Soldiers, Airmen, family members, and dignitaries gathered for the main event on Salem Common to celebrate the 1636 founding of the North, South, and East Regiments and the First Muster in 1637. A howitzer salute was fired with martial music. Along with this remembrance officials in attendance recognized the Soldiers of the 126th Brigade Support Battalion’s Forward Logistics Element, who will deploy to Iraq, continuing the long and proud tradition of the Massachusetts National Guard.